



FISHMAN

1935

Poplar

15" H

Inscriptions:

front "Fishman / Here Yo' Spotts"

back "4-4-35 / L. G. Bolling"

Lent by Steve and Jackie

Coleman

EXHIBITIONS

1935 "Fourth Annual Exhibition of Virginia Artists" (Richmond)

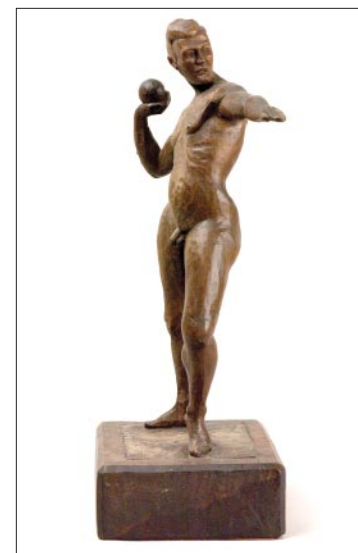
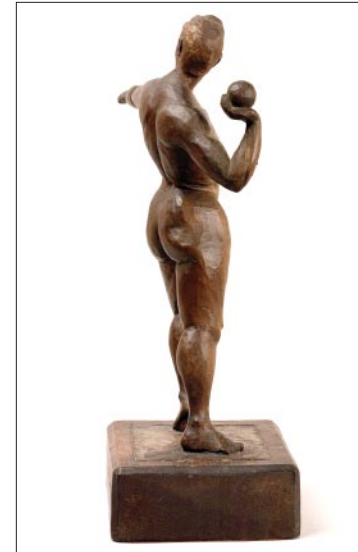
1936 Harmon Foundation (Portland, Oregon)

Fishman was included in a Harmon Foundation-sponsored collection that traveled to the Portland (Oregon) Museum of Art in May 1936. A photograph of the sculpture accompanied a notice in the *Oregon Journal* of "the long-heralded collection of Negro art." The exhibition was brought to Portland through the efforts of *The Advocate*, Portland's African American newspaper edited by Beatrice Morrow Cannady.¹

Fishman is one of Bolling's most complex sculptures and demonstrates his ability to capture motion. The figure is in full stride, balancing with the ball of his right foot and with the heel of his left foot touching the ground. The man carries fish in his right hand and slings a woven basket over his shoulder. He turns to shout over his right shoulder. The composition conveys a sense of urgency and motion.

Fishman documents a trade that was vanishing during Bolling's lifetime. Before World War II, vendors hawked their varied wares not only in Richmond's markets but also in the city's residential neighborhoods. The spot, *Leiostomus xanthurus*, a member of the croaker family, is found along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States and is particularly plentiful in the Chesapeake Bay area. A small fish, the spot has a characteristic dark spot above and behind the gill slit. Spots are easily caught in shallow water with live bait.

1. "Exhibit of Negro Art At Museum," *Oregon Journal*, 17 May 1936, clipping in Harmon Foundation Papers, Library of Congress. The sculptor was identified as "Garland Bolling." For information about Beatrice Morrow Cannady, see "Beatrice Morrow Cannady: The Public Advocate," by Hosea H. Harvey, at <http://www.law.stanford.edu/library/wlhbpp/papers0203/BMCannady.pdf> [active 7/31/06].



THE SHOT PUTTER

1933
Poplar
14 3/4" H

Inscriptions:

front "The Shot Putter"

back "12 '33 L. G. Bolling"

Lent anonymously

EXHIBITIONS

1935 "The Wood Sculptures of
Leslie Bolling" (Richmond)

The stance of the shot-putter, a nude male figure, suggests that Bolling had seen photographs of the fifth-century BC Greek bronze sculpture of Zeus or Poseidon, discovered in 1926 off Cape Artemisium. Although *The Shot Putter* is not an accurate depiction of the shot-put stance, it nevertheless demonstrates Bolling's interest in the motion of the human body, as the figure begins to shift weight from his proper right leg to his left. His proper left arm is straight, and he holds the shot in his right hand, which has moved away from the start position of cradling the shot against the neck. Using clearly defined musculature of arms and torso, Bolling conveys the tensing of calf muscles as the body twists and the head turns to the left.

Putting the shot is one of the oldest skills that requires strength and grace. "Put" is old Scottish for "thrust," and the sport probably originated in Scottish Highland games. The sport originally used stones that weighed between twelve and twenty-two pounds. In modern shot put, the shot is an iron sphere weighing about sixteen pounds. The athlete balances the shot on the neck next to the jaw and either glides or spins to thrust the shot into the field. The farthest-thrown shot wins the competition.

The Shot Putter was exhibited in the 1935 one-man exhibition of Bolling's work mounted by the Richmond Academy of Arts. Albert W. Pollard (1897–1971), listed as the owner, was a realtor with Pollard and Bagby, a firm created by his father, Henry R. Pollard Jr. (1869–1912), and John Bagby in 1894.



WOMAN COOKING

1942
Poplar
12" H

Inscription:
back "L. G. Bolling / Nov 19 / 42"

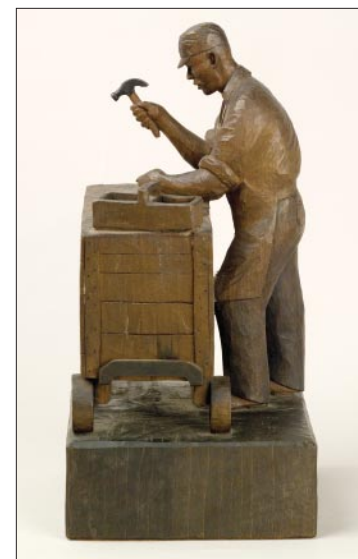
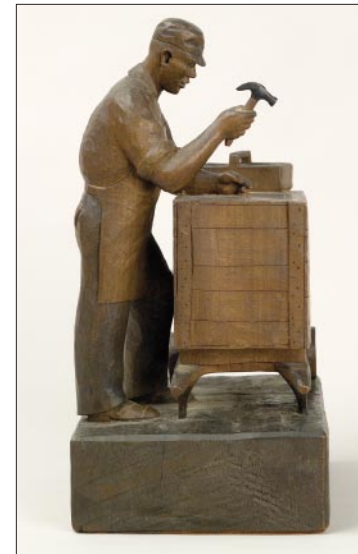
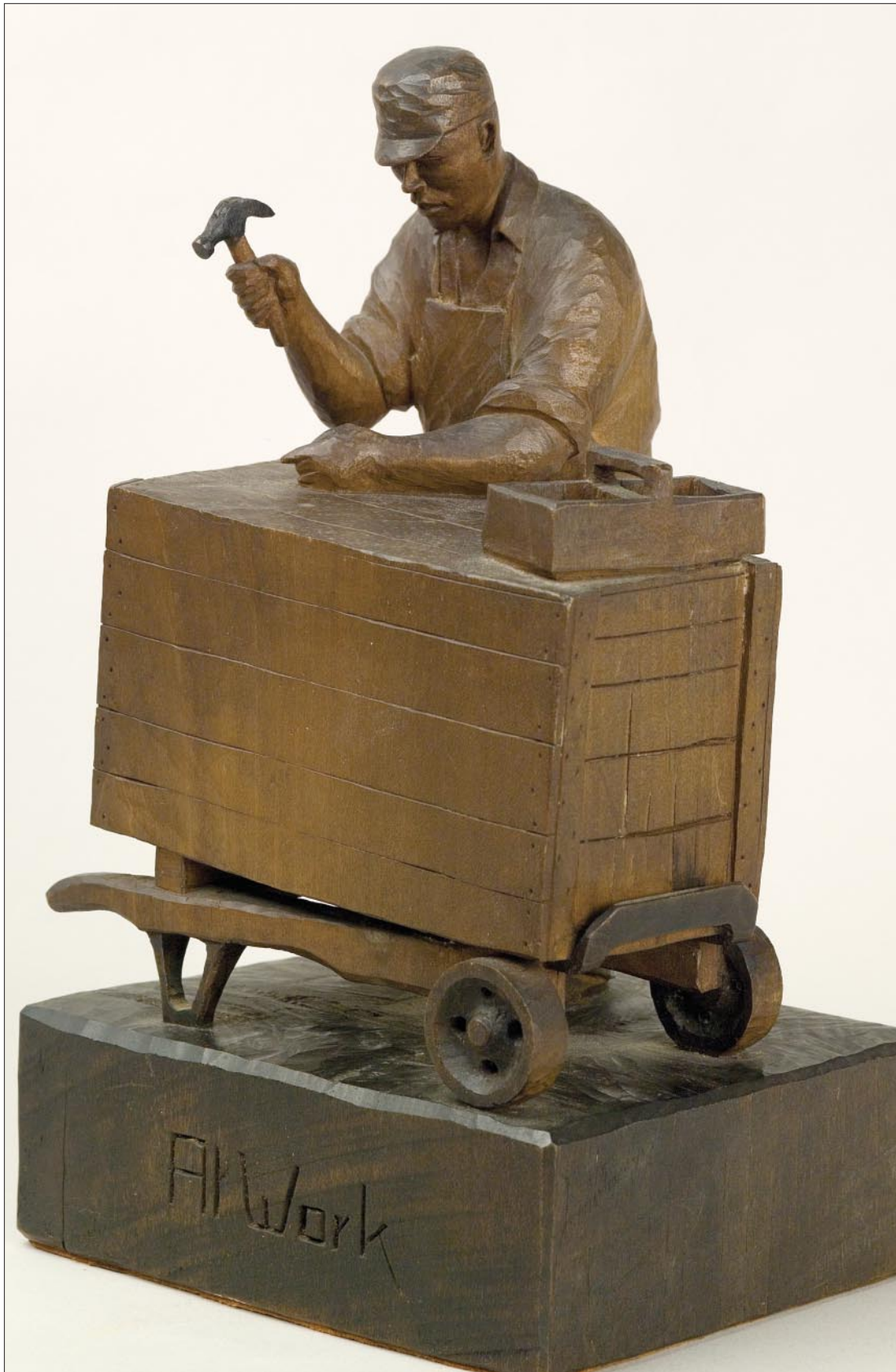
Lent by Bill Robinson

As late as 1942, Bolling returned to carving figures of women engaged in domestic tasks. *Woman Cooking* shows a woman wearing a house cap and a shirtwaist dress under an apron. She stands just to the left of the stove as if reaching for the coffee pot that sits on a burner. Next to the coffee pot is a pan with fish. A kettle also sits on the stove. The woman's left arm hangs down by her side. The stove is a woodburner and, by setting the woman to the left, the doors to the oven, firebox, and ash box are clearly visible. In 1937 Bolling exhibited *Cooking on Saturday*, part of the Days of the Week series, which showed a woman squatting to pull a turkey out of the oven. Although *Woman Cooking* lacks the vitality of Bolling's *Cooking on Saturday*, Bolling invested character in the woman's face and the carefully carved details of the stove.



Cooking on Saturday from E. J. Tangerman, *Design and Figure Carving* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1940)

This sculpture and *Save America* (1941) were owned by Samuel Z. and Rebecca Troy, who ran Troy's Bargain Center, located at the corner of East Clay and First Streets in Richmond.



AT WORK

1937

11 1/2" H

Poplar

Inscriptions:

front "At Work"

back "10-23-'37 / To Mr. Quinn

From L. G. Bolling / 5-21-38"

Lent by the Poehler family in
memory of Raymond Poehler

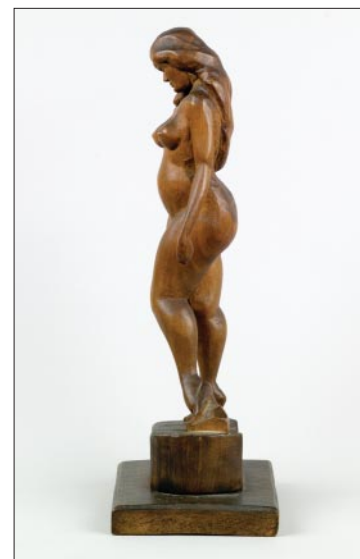
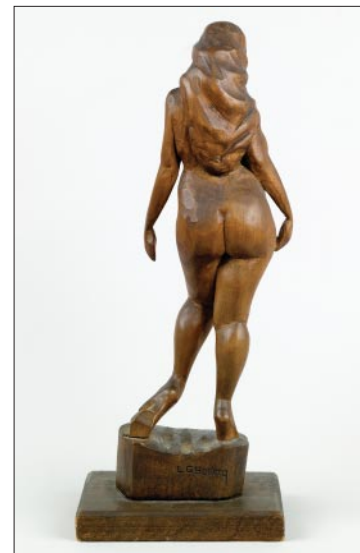
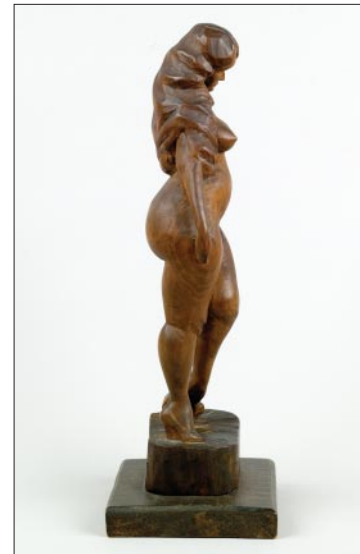
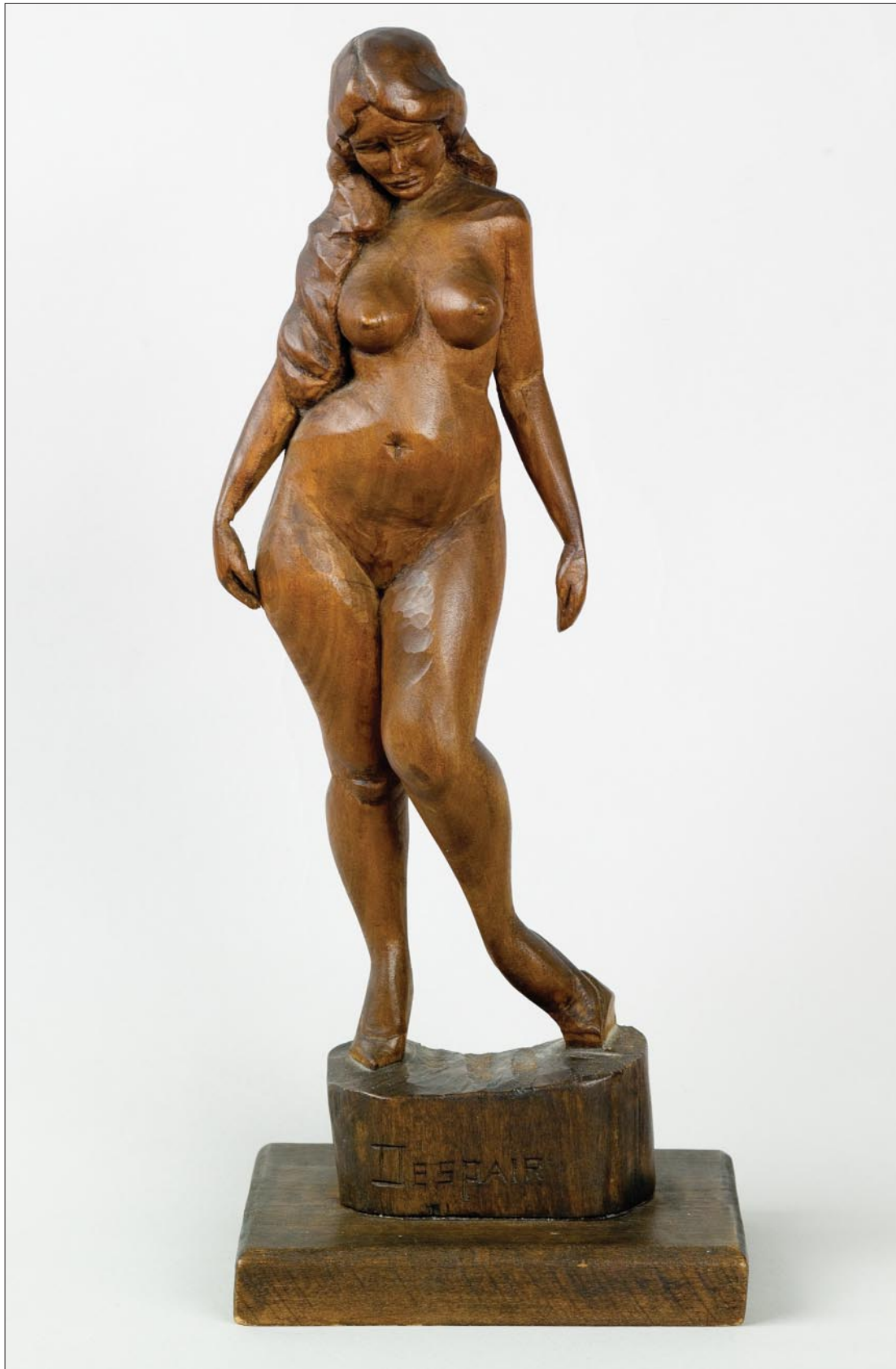
At Work may be a self-portrait of the artist. The sculpture shows a man closing up a wooden crate that is balanced on a handcart. The man wears a cap and a work apron over a shirt open at the neck and with the sleeves rolled up. About 1937 the Harmon Foundation filmed Bolling at work at Everett Waddey Co., located on South Eleventh Street, packing and closing a crate very much like the one in the sculpture.¹ As with his figures of working people, Bolling conveys the sense of motion as the right arm swings up and the left hand moves forward to position the next nail. The figure's left knee steadies the crate, and a handled box, perhaps used to hold nails, sits on top of the crate. Bolling's interest in detail is evident in the laces of the shoe and the back pockets of the man's trousers. Further, Bolling scribed lines in the block of the crate to indicate the wood planks and bored tiny holes to suggest the nails used in the construction of the crate. The result is a carefully crafted homage to a workman engaged in physically demanding, intellectually unimaginative work.

The "Mr. Quinn" to whom Bolling inscribed *At Work* was Martin L. Quinn, a shipping clerk at Everett Waddey Co. Quinn evidently lent the sculpture to a Richmond Academy of Arts exhibition, probably in 1938. When Quinn died, his aunt, Elizabeth Poehler, received the sculpture. *At Work* descended through the Poehler family to the present owner.²

1. In 1882 Everett Waddey established the company that bore his name. By 1930, the company had built an eight-story concrete building between the southern ends of Eleventh and Twelfth Streets in downtown Richmond. The building incorporated the printing and lithography divisions of the company, as well as its bindery and shipping departments. Among its amenities were a roof garden and a top floor with a cafeteria and recreation room for employees. See Robert Gordon, "A Leader in the Graphic Arts," *Richmond Magazine* 17, no. 3 (September 1930): 31-32.

2. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, and Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. The remains of a Richmond Academy of Arts label and another label listing Quinn as the owner are attached to the bottom of the base.





DESPAIR

Ca. 1935

Poplar

13 3/4" H

Inscriptions:

front "Despair"

back "L. G. Bolling"

Lent by Harriette D. Davidson

EXHIBITIONS

1935 "The Wood Sculptures of
Leslie Bolling" (Richmond)

When she viewed the one-man exhibition in 1935, Julia Sully, the art critic for the *Richmond News Leader*, considered *Despair* the "better of the two" small nude figures displayed. Sully noted that all the lines swept down, as if to emphasize the sadness of the figure. Like his *Salome III*, executed about the same time, the knife marks are visible on *Despair*, giving the figure an unfinished quality. Her proportions are realistic, but she is unusual with long hair that flows down her back and over her proper right shoulder. Her proper left hand is held slightly away from her body, and her proper right hand barely touches her hip. Like most of Bolling's nudes, she wears high heels.¹

1. The other small nude sculpture was *Curves*, as yet unlocated. Julia Sully Papers, Acc. 26567, Box 1, folder 2, Library of Virginia.